GENEALOGYBANK.COM SEARCH TIPS

Scott M. Spencer

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About GenealogyBank

GenealogyBank is a leading online genealogical resource from NewsBank, Inc. GenealogyBank's exclusive newspaper archive features over 13,000+ small town and big city historical newspapers across the U.S., from 1690 to present day, to help you discover and document your family story. You'll find births, marriages, engagement notices, hometown news, obituaries and much more! Search today and get a glimpse into the triumphs, troubles and everyday experiences of your American ancestors.

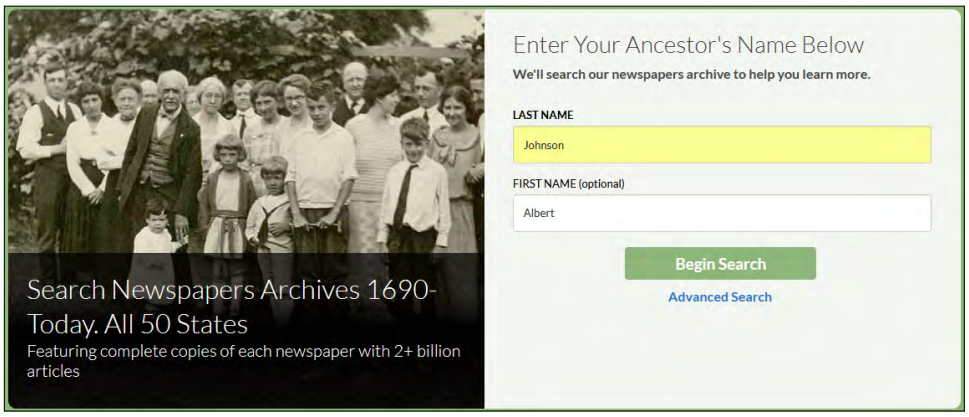
NewsBank, Inc. has been one of the world's premier information providers for more than 45 years. Through partnerships with the American Antiquarian Society, Wisconsin Historical Society and more than 3,000 publishers, NewsBank is uniquely qualified to offer some of the most comprehensive genealogical information available – and to provide new content regularly.

About the Author

Scott M. Spencer, MBA, is a genealogy enthusiast who shares a passion for family history research. He currently serves as Vice President of Product Management and Customer Experience for GenealogyBank.com. Scott has spent the past 18 years in the genealogy industry having worked for Ancestry.com and FamilyLink.com prior to joining GenealogyBank.

Searching First and Last Names

We recommended that you first start broadly by beginning your search using only the first and last name of your ancestor.



It may be tempting to enter additional information all at once such as specific dates, middle or maiden names. However, every word or name entered into a search field must be contained in the actual newspaper article in order for it to be retrieved as a match. In other words, if the word or name you're searching for is not contained in the newspaper article itself, GenealogyBank will not recognize it as a match.

For example, if the name in the newspaper article does not contain the middle name or initial of your ancestor, GenealogyBank will not retrieve results for that name even though it may contain results of that name without the middle name.

GenealogyBank will look for the first and last names within four words of one another. This allows two gaps for possible middle names in-between the first and last name. For example, Albert _____ _____ Johnson. If you search for the first name Albert and the last name Johnson, you may get results for "Albert and Sally Johnson," "Albert C Johnson," "Albert Carey Johnson" and even "Johnson, Albert."

If the first or last names are uncommon, try searching the uncommon name without the other.

Remember, you can always add more information to narrow your search results.

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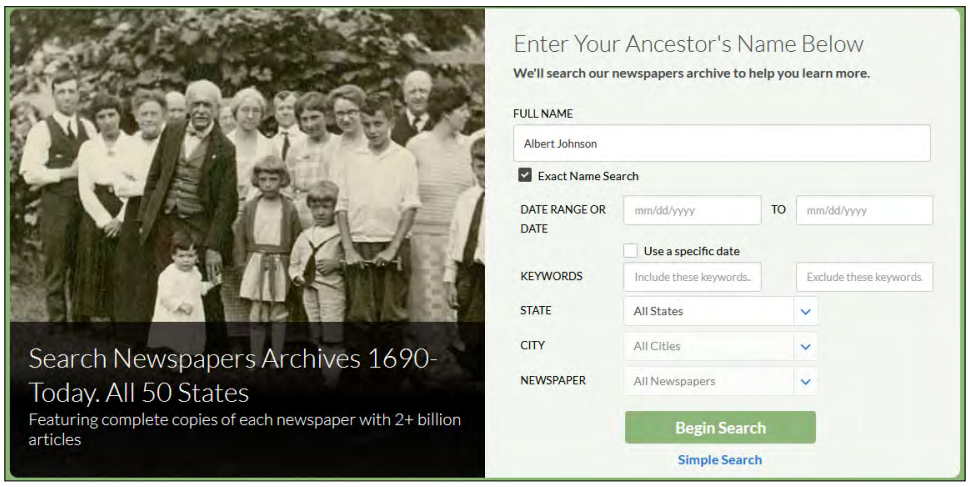
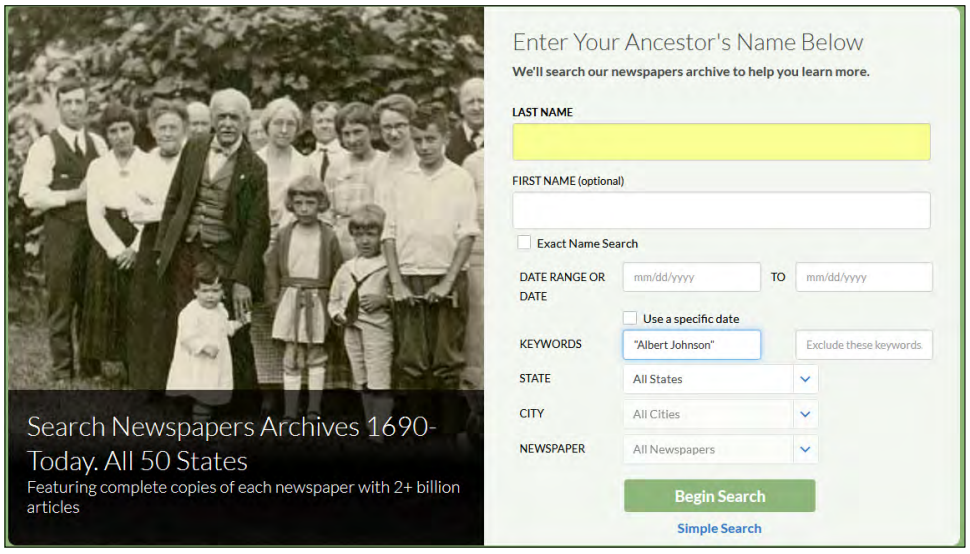
Performing an Exact Search

You can search for an exact phrase or name in an exact order. This will eliminate the gaps in-between the first and last names as mentioned above. It will also keep the names in order.

To conduct an exact search, click “Advanced Search.” Enter the first and last name and click the “Exact Name Search” checkbox. Using the example above for Albert Johnson, we would enter Johnson in the last name field and Albert in the first name field. After clicking the “Exact Name Search” checkbox, the two names would appear in this exact order and without middle names. You could also enter “Albert C. Johnson,” “Albert Carey Johnson,” or “A. C. Johnson,” for example.



You can also perform an exact search using the “Include These Keywords” field. When using this field, you will need to include quotations around the name or phrase. “Albert Johnson” for example.



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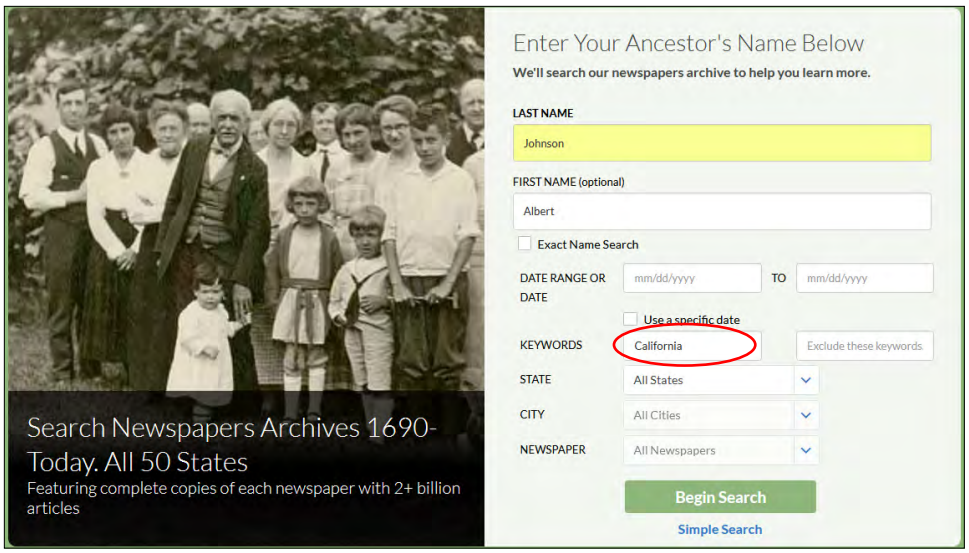
Understanding Location

Think of your local newspaper and how few of the articles are from the city or state in which it's published. This was common throughout history. One misconception is that small town news didn't travel, when in fact it did.

A photo of a woman helping a pet duck cross the road in Allentown, Pennsylvania, was published in newspapers as far away as Illinois and Tennessee. An article indicating that the mail would be delayed because the part-time, rural Indiana carrier was ill was published in a South Carolina newspaper. You never know where articles with your ancestors may have been published! Therefore, it is recommended that you start by searching all states and then narrow your search from there.

To narrow your search results, try entering the name of the state or city in the "Include These Keywords" field. This will search for articles published anywhere in the U.S. that mention that city or state along with the name you're searching.

The exact spelling of each word entered into the "Include These Keywords" field must be in the newspaper article for it to be retrieved as a match. Therefore, it is recommended that you use either the city or state name, but not both. Sometimes the name of a location in the article is abbreviated. For example, the state of California can be abbreviated Calif or CA and the city of San Francisco can be abbreviated San Fran or SF. If you're entering more than one word, remember to use quotations. San Francisco should be entered as "San Francisco" for example.



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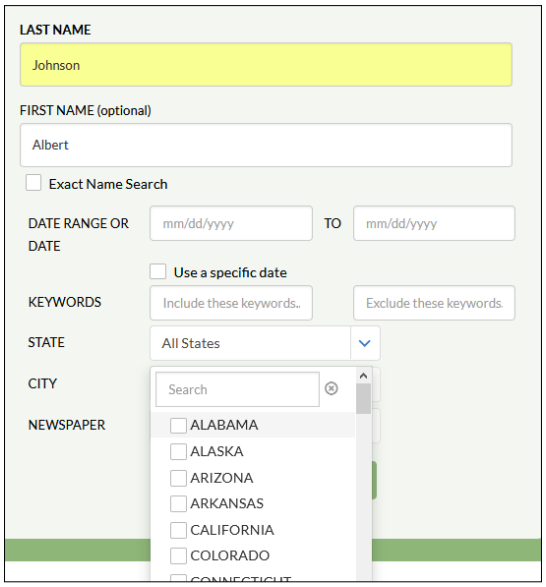
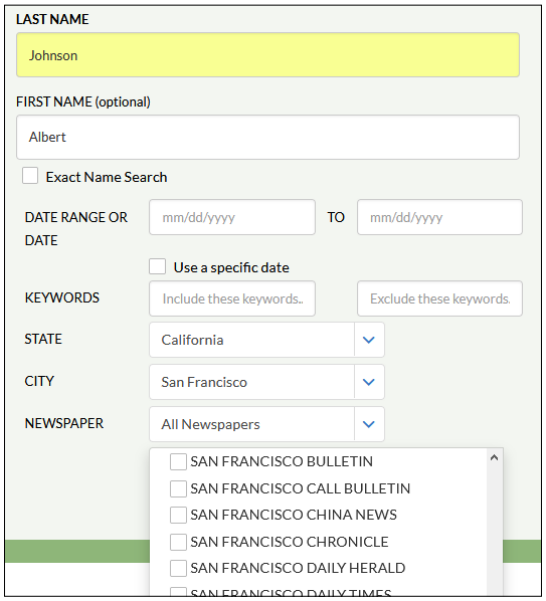
It is possible to narrow your search to a specific state, city, or newspaper. This can be helpful when searching for a common name like John Smith.

You can search within a specific state or states by clicking on the checkmark in the "State" field. This drops down a menu; select the state or states you want to search.



From there you can search within a specific city or newspaper. In this example, we chose "California" in the "State" field and "San Francisco" from the resulting drop-down menu in the "City" field. Then, we can scroll through all the San Francisco newspapers in the drop-down menu in the "Newspaper" field.



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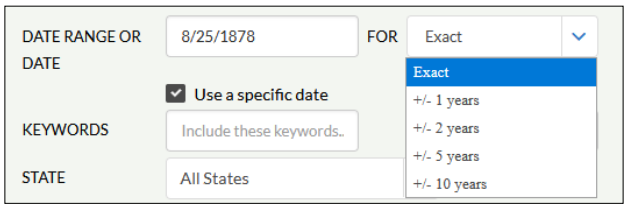
Using Date Fields

Entering a specific date or a date range can help narrow your search results. When using a date remember to start broadly and then narrow your results from there. The newspaper article may not have been published on the exact date of the event, so it is best to start with a broad date range.

Example: March 14, 1802 to Oct 15, 1855

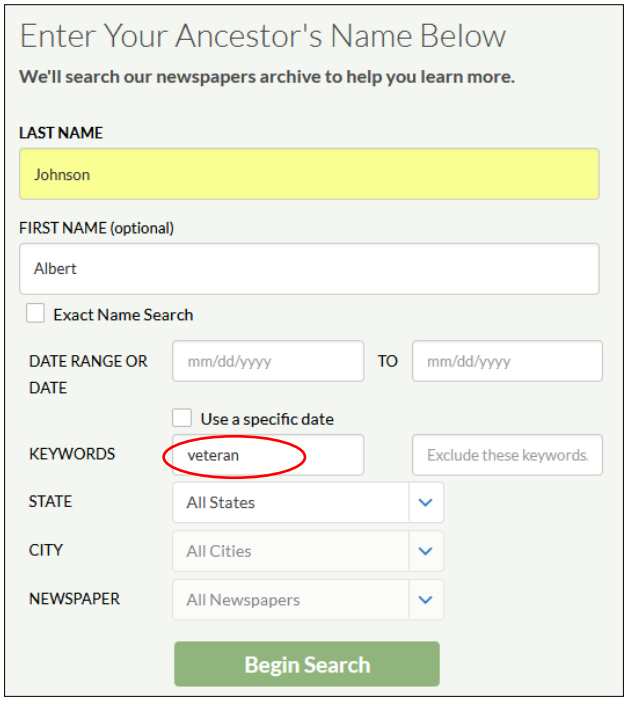
Example: August 25, 1878



Using Keywords Fields

Include These Keywords: Using this field will eliminate any results that do not contain both the ancestor's name as well as the keyword(s) entered.

As mentioned above, every word or name entered into this field must be contained on the actual newspaper page or article in order for it to be retrieved as a match. For example, if you are searching for a war veteran, try entering the keyword vet or veteran.



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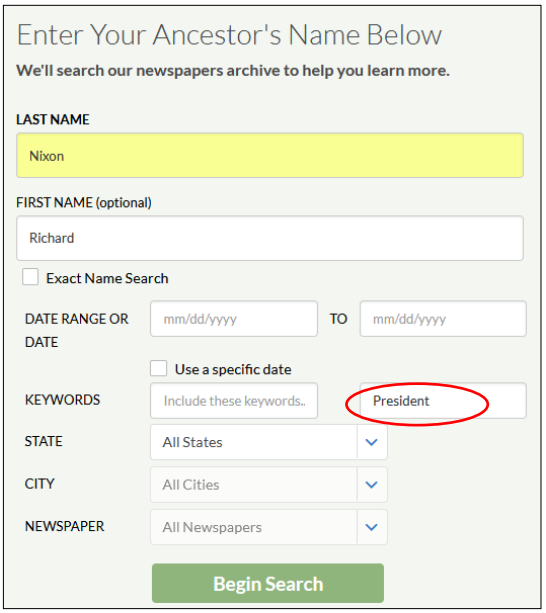
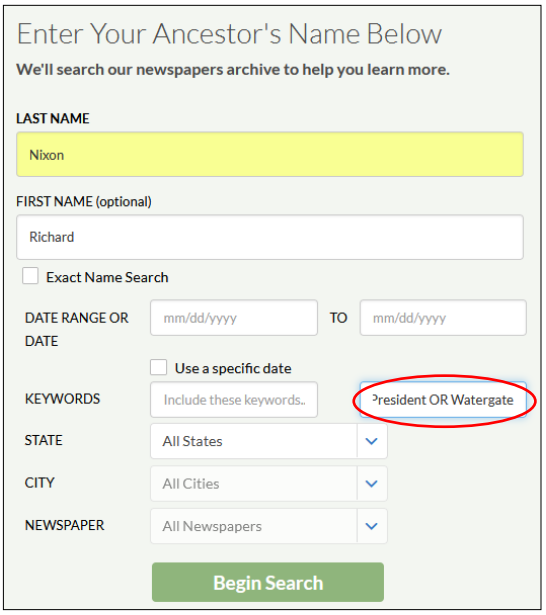
The most effective keywords are often the name of a city or town where your ancestors lived at that time. When searching for an obituary, you may also try searching for the first name of a surviving family member, or occupation keywords like teacher, chemist or farmer.

Exclude These Keywords: The "Exclude These Keywords" field is helpful in eliminating results that do not apply to the individual you are searching for.

For example, if you are looking for an article on a man named Richard Nixon but you don't want articles about the president, entering words like "President," "Watergate," or "Republican" into the "Exclude These Keywords" field will remove articles from your search results that include those words.



You can enter more than one keyword into the "Include These Keywords" and "Exclude These Keywords" fields. Do this by adding the word OR (with both letters capitalized) between each keyword.



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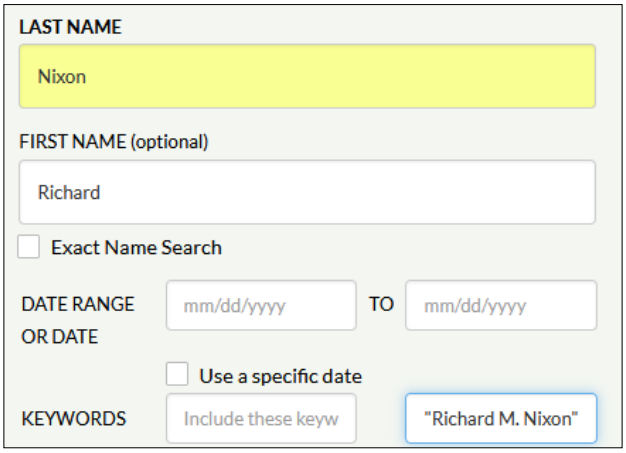
You can also include a phrase in quotation marks in the "Exclude These Keywords" field to further refine your search results. For example, President Richard Nixon's middle initial was "M." Entering "Richard M. Nixon" into that field would eliminate results that referred to him this way, as he often was. Entering this name in quotation marks will only remove the results for Richard M. Nixon and not results for Richard Nixon.



Additional search tips can be found under the "Help" section on GenealogyBank.com at http://bit.ly/16otHSK

If you need further assistance, contact a site expert at 866-641-3297, Monday thru Friday 9 am to 5 pm in all U.S. time zones.

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